

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-68831-5 - The Platonic Conception of Immortality and its Connexion
with the Theory of Ideas: An Essay which Obtained the Hare Prize, 1903

R. K. Gaye

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

The Platonic Conception of
Immortality and its Connexion
with the Theory of Ideas

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-68831-5 - The Platonic Conception of Immortality and its Connexion
with the Theory of Ideas: An Essay which Obtained the Hare Prize, 1903

R. K. Gaye

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of
education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107688315

© Cambridge University Press 1904

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
no reproduction of any part may take place without the written
permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 1904

First paperback edition 2014

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-107-68831-5 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of
URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication,
and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate
or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-68831-5 - The Platonic Conception of Immortality and its Connexion
with the Theory of Ideas: An Essay which Obtained the Hare Prize, 1903

R. K. Gaye

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

The Platonic Conception of Immortality and its Connexion with the Theory of Ideas

AN ESSAY WHICH OBTAINED THE HARE PRIZE, 1903

BY

R. K. GAYE, M.A.,

FELLOW OF TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

LONDON

C. J. CLAY AND SONS

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS WAREHOUSE

AVE MARIA LANE

1904

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-68831-5 - The Platonic Conception of Immortality and its Connexion
with the Theory of Ideas: An Essay which Obtained the Hare Prize, 1903

R. K. Gaye

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

ΜΙΜΕΪΣΘΑΙ ΔΕΙΝ ΗΜᾶς ΟΪΕΤΑΙ ΠΆΧΗ ΜΗΧΑΝῆ ΤὸΝ ἘΠὶ ΤΟῦ
Κρόνου λεγόμενον βίον, καὶ ὅσον ἐν ἡμῖν ἀθανασίας ἔνεστι,
τοῦτῳ πειθόμενος δημοσίᾳ καὶ ἰδίᾳ τὰς τ' οἰκίσεις καὶ τὰς
πόλεις διοικεῖν, τὴν τοῦ νοῦ διανομὴν ἐπινομάζοντας νόμον.

PLATO *Laws* 713 E.

Quand l'immortalité de l'âme seroit une erreur, je serois fâché
de ne pas la croire: j'avoue que je ne suis pas si humble que les
athées. Je ne sais comment ils pensent; mais pour moi je ne veux
pas troquer l'idée de mon immortalité contre celle de la béatitude
d'un jour. Je suis charmé de me croire immortel comme Dieu
même. Indépendamment des idées révélées, les idées méta-
physiques me donnent une très-forte espérance de mon bonheur
éternel, à laquelle je ne voudrois pas renoncer.

MONTESQUIEU *Pensées Diverses*.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-68831-5 - The Platonic Conception of Immortality and its Connexion with the Theory of Ideas: An Essay which Obtained the Hare Prize, 1903

R. K. Gaye

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PREFACE.

“A SCIENTIFIC basis was first given to the belief in immortality by Plato,” says Zeller (*Pre-Socratics* I. 74). Commenting on this statement, Mr E. S. Thompson in his edition of the *Meno* (p. 289) remarks: “This basis is found in the doctrine of Ideas.” My object here is to follow up a little more closely the connexion existing between these two theories with which the name of Plato will always be associated—the Theory of Ideas and the Theory of the Immortality of the Soul. In this way I hope to make clear the nature of Plato’s conception of immortality and to determine in what sense, if any, he believed in the continued existence of the individual soul. But this main subject has inevitably involved the consideration of a larger question, namely the Platonic conception of the nature of the soul and more especially of the mutual relations of soul and body.

In the following pages, then, I have attempted to trace the rise and gradual development of the doctrine of immortality as it was formulated in Plato’s mind and to indicate certain changes which, as it seems to me, he introduces into this doctrine in consequence of a modification of his theory of soul—a modification due, as I endeavour to prove, to changes in his metaphysical theories. My contention is that *mutatis mutandis* very

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-68831-5 - The Platonic Conception of Immortality and its Connexion with the Theory of Ideas: An Essay which Obtained the Hare Prize, 1903

R. K. Gaye

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

much the same differences are to be found in his later as compared with his earlier theory of soul as those which Dr Henry Jackson has discovered in the later as compared with the earlier Theory of Ideas; and these differences must necessarily affect his views on the subject of immortality. The most important Dialogues of which we have to take account in this connexion are of course the *Phaedo* and the *Timaeus*, which, both from the standpoint of the theory of soul and from that of ontology, may fairly be regarded as typical respectively of what Dr Jackson would call Plato's earlier and later philosophical periods. But several others, notably the *Phaedrus*, the *Republic*, and the tenth book of the *Laws*, contain much that cannot be neglected in any attempt to fulfil the task which I have undertaken.

Mr R. D. Archer-Hind in the Introduction to his edition of the *Phaedo*, where he is discussing Plato's attitude towards the question of immortality, maintains that Plato, when he composed that dialogue, upheld the immortality of the individual soul. He proceeds, however, to remark (p. 31): "I have made this defence of the literal interpretation not because I consider that the continued existence of the individual is of any real importance in the Platonic system—I should not go so far as to affirm that it was retained to the last—but because, in order that we may follow historically the development of Plato's thought, it is important for us to determine precisely what he means to set forth in each dialogue." In what follows I on the other hand hope not only to go so far as to affirm that a belief in individual immortality was retained by Plato to the last, but to show further that, though his philosophical system as a whole does not depend for its truth on the continued existence

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-68831-5 - The Platonic Conception of Immortality and its Connexion with the Theory of Ideas: An Essay which Obtained the Hare Prize, 1903

R. K. Gaye

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PREFACE

vii

of the individual, he does nevertheless attach a real importance to the doctrine, and as a matter of fact goes out of his way to affirm it in one of the most important metaphysical parts of the *Timaeus*.

It will be seen throughout this essay how greatly I am indebted to Dr Jackson's papers in *The Journal of Philology* (vols. X, XI, XIII, XIV, XV) on "Plato's Later Theory of Ideas": and my obligation to Mr Archer-Hind's editions of the *Phaedo* and the *Timaeus* is hardly less obvious. It is to these sources almost entirely that I owe the view I take of the metaphysical significance of the Dialogues of the later period, that is to say the period represented by the *Parmenides*, *Philebus*, *Theaetetus*, *Sophist*, *Politicus*, and *Timaeus*. In fact, had it not been for the labours of these scholars in showing that Plato's Dialogues reflect two distinct stages of metaphysical opinion, this essay could never have been written, based as it is throughout on the assumption that there really was some such modification of Plato's philosophical doctrines as they hold to have taken place. If I have ventured in some points of detail to express a divergence of opinion, this in no way detracts from the value which I attach, and which, I imagine, all who are interested in the subject must attach, to their attempt (in my opinion successful) to obtain a rational interpretation of Platonic philosophy in accordance with the statements of Plato himself and the testimony of Aristotle. The main conclusions at which they have arrived seem to me, if not certain, to contain at least a very high degree of probability, and I have been content to presume them throughout.

I am also in a slighter degree a debtor to two other Platonic scholars: the late Dr W. H. Thompson, whose

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-68831-5 - The Platonic Conception of Immortality and its Connexion with the Theory of Ideas: An Essay which Obtained the Hare Prize, 1903

R. K. GAYE

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

viii

PREFACE

edition of the *Phaedrus* I have used with pleasure and, I hope, with profit; and Mr E. S. Thompson, whose instructive commentary on the *Meno* is most useful to any student of Plato. Though I do not think anything in what follows is directly derived from these editions, I have found them both very helpful for the understanding of Plato's language and philosophy.

I cannot conclude without reference to what is really my greatest debt, though it can be ascribed to no written source. I am sure that all who have studied under Dr Jackson will agree with me in acknowledging the immense help they have received from his oral instruction, not only in the lecture-room, but still more in those informal conversations in which they have attempted to play the part of Theaetetus. I could not venture to estimate the extent to which in this essay I have been consciously or unconsciously inspired by hints and suggestions which have come to me in this manner: but my indebtedness and, I hope, my gratitude are not the less because I am unable to acknowledge in detail my obligations to one who carries out so faithfully Plato's injunction to teachers—*δεῖ δὲ εἰς δύναμιν μηδὲν παραλείπειν αὐτῷ, πάντα δὲ λόγον ἀφερμηνεύειν, ἵνα οὗτος τοῖς ἄλλοις μνηστής τε ἅμα καὶ τροφεὺς γίγνηται.*

R. K. GAYE.

TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

11 October, 1904.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-68831-5 - The Platonic Conception of Immortality and its Connexion
with the Theory of Ideas: An Essay which Obtained the Hare Prize, 1903

R. K. Gaye

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CONTENTS.

CHAP.		PAGE
	Introduction	I
I.	Pre-Platonic Views of Immortality	4
II.	The <i>Symposium</i>	17
III.	The <i>Phaedrus</i>	33
IV.	The <i>Republic</i>	48
V.	The <i>Phaedo</i>	67
VI.	Immortality and the earlier Theory of Ideas	102
VII.	Changes in Plato's Doctrine	114
VIII.	The <i>Timæus</i>	132
IX.	The <i>Laws</i>	176
X.	Immortality and the later Platonism	194
XI.	The Degeneration of Souls	227
XII.	The Place of Immortality in Plato's Philosophy	242
	Conclusion	255